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THE "DEMOCRACY" OF UNIVERSAL MILITARY SERVICE

By WALDO R. BROWNE

IN THAT remote past before the Great War, nothing else seemed quite so effective in making the average American citizen proud of his citizenship as a little reflection on the conscript military system of Europe. How odious and wasteful we used to consider that plan of forcing young men to give their most valuable years to the senseless puppetry of drill-ground and barracks-room! How revolting seemed the idea of driving men like cattle to the battle-field, regardless of the justice or injustice of their country's cause! With what glow of self-righteousness and self-gratulation did we read of such things as the Dreyfus case and the Zabern incident! With what shuddering indignation did we view the tyranny and degradation of barracks life, as revealed to us in play or novel! And in our innocence we would cry out: "Thank God, we live in a land free of *that* curse!"

But all this was long ago—nearly three years ago. Today this system which we had always looked upon as a thing wholly and irremediably evil, a barbaric survival among monarchical institutions—today it is being proclaimed up and down the country as not only necessary to our further existence as a nation, but as a thing that is virtuous and beautiful and desirable in itself. Specifically, it is declared to be the exact antithesis and polar opposite of what we had hitherto supposed it to be—it is splendidly "democratic." No other of its numerous virtues is dwelt upon more fulsomely than that. And it is "democratic" because it bears upon rich and poor alike, it places equal responsibility upon and requires equal service from the son of Dives and the son of Lazarus. This sort of reasoning is not peculiar to our American war-lords, however. We saw it applied the other day in the German government's announcement of industrial conscription: that measure also involved both rich and poor, and so, as its sponsors were at great pains to emphasize, was finely "democratic."

Now, if this reasoning be valid—if, indeed, the democratic test of any governmental measure relates only to its "universal" application, without regard to its moral and political connotations—then Germany represents today the finest flower, the ultimate distillation, of the democratic theory. But it is not valid. Democracy is something more than a mere form or manner of administration; it is a political code based on explicit moral sanctions, one of the chief of which is Kant's fundamental ethical law that an individual must always be considered as an end in himself, never as a means to an end. The essence of democracy is inherent in the principle of *free consent*, as opposed to *compulsion*—in the conception of men and women as individual *wills* rather than as *chattels*.

Compulsory military service is no more democratic, because of its "universal" application, than would be a national program for placing all male citizens between certain age limits in government prisons for an equal term of years. In truth, a measure which would compel many hundreds of thousands of Americans to conform to a revolutionary innovation in our national affairs that is repugnant to their deepest moral convictions is the very denial and negation of democracy.

"What is it to be born free and not to live free?" asks Thoreau. "What is the value of any political freedom but as a means to moral freedom? Is it a freedom to be slaves, or a freedom to be free, of which we boast?"

On the day when this country adopts compulsory military laws she will cease to be a democracy, because she will have denied her citizens the liberty of individual thought and action in a matter touching the well-springs of religion and morality. She will have denied them the right to be considered as personalities rather than as chattels—as ends in themselves rather than as means to an end. She will have denied them the freedom to be free.

COMPULSORY MILITARY TRAINING

By GEORGE A. WALTON

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ONCE when the doctor came a little girl sidled up to him, saying quietly, "I know four doctors—you and Dr. Quiet and Dr. Diet and Dr. Merryman." "Yes," he answered, "and I know another one, better than all the rest put together—Dr. Time."

It is this last-named gentleman, Dr. Time, that has not been consulted by the supporters of military training. Every real educator knows that educational processes take time. He knows that it takes time to teach a child the right methods of study, to develop an interest in a new and difficult subject. He knows that children who slur their words or think vaguely or write broken sentences need time to learn correct enunciation, clear thinking, and proper sentence structures. Many a child will learn to write correct English for the English teacher; but much time is required for that habit to permeate his whole self, so that on all occasions he writes in good form. To instill qualities of mind and spirit requires time—not days and weeks, but months and years.

The proposals that have so far been made for compulsory military training overlook this fact and appear inadequate and foolish to one who has had experience in educative work. War is a very complicated procedure, and it is ridiculous to suppose that a training of value for real war can be given in the proposed periods of 15 or 20 days annually. It is also argued that military training will develop among the American people desirable spiritual qualities now lacking. Teachers in other lines of education would not care to be held responsible for results if they were expected to transform the moral nature of an adolescent boy or girl in so short a time.

The Plattsburg experiment, although carried out under special conditions, has been only partially successful. Efficient, mature men volunteered to go to Plattsburg and made remarkable progress. Inefficient boys, not yet full grown, compelled to take military training, will not give the same response. Among the younger men who have been at Plattsburg, it is not hard to gather evidence that the time spent is insufficient to produce the moral qualities supposed to be inculcated by military training. It was a young man, but recently from Plattsburg, who drove his automobile into the soft earth by the roadside, crushing down the young grass